



SENATOR CHARLES SCHWERTNER, MD

SENATE DISTRICT 5

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Schwertner to File Legislation Legalizing Ridesharing Statewide

Citing free market and public safety concerns, Dr. Charles Schwertner announces plans to bring fair and consistent regulation to transportation networking companies like Uber and Lyft in the upcoming legislative session.

AUSTIN, TX -- Today, Senator Charles Schwertner, MD (R-Georgetown) announced he will file a bill in the upcoming legislative session designed to establish consistent and predictable statewide regulation of ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft, also known as transportation networking companies (TNCs). The 85th Session of the Texas Legislature convenes in January 2017.

"It has become increasingly clear that Texas' ridesharing companies can no longer operate effectively through a patchwork of inconsistent and anti-competitive regulations," said Schwertner. "Any *legitimate* safety or liability concern regarding ridesharing clearly deserves to be addressed, and I welcome all parties to engage productively in that discussion. But as a state with a long tradition of supporting the free market, Texas should not accept transparent, union-driven efforts to create new barriers to entry for the sole purpose of stifling innovation and eliminating competition."

In a few short years, ridesharing companies like Uber and Lyft have contributed to a dramatic reduction in both drunk driving accidents and arrests in cities where they've been allowed to operate. As a result, ridesharing companies have earned the enthusiastic support of national organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MAAD) and local law enforcement officials like Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo and Travis County Sheriff Greg Hamilton.

"As a father of three, I feel like we should be doing everything we can to reduce the number of drunk driving deaths in Texas," continued Schwertner. "Ridesharing has proven to be one of the most effective tools against drunk driving and, to me, it defies common sense that anyone would want to make it harder, rather than easier, for people to get home safely."

The issues surrounding ridesharing have also had a significant economic impact on the citizens of Senate District 5, including approximately 40,000 Austin residents living in Williamson County. As a source of employment, ridesharing provides fulltime or supplemental income for over 5,000 Uber or Lyft drivers living in Williamson County, and countless other residents of north Austin, Cedar Park, Round Rock, and Georgetown depend on ridesharing services to commute to work, travel to the airport, or get home safely from downtown.

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“I’ve heard from dozens of constituents in my district, including many Austin residents, who depend on either the service or revenue that ridesharing provides,” said Schwertner. “People are free to select whatever method of transportation they prefer, but we shouldn’t be trying to restrict the options available to our citizens when it comes to addressing our transportation needs.”

A medical doctor by training, Dr. Schwertner currently serves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. Schwertner is currently serving his second term as the senator for Senate District 5, a ten-county region of central and east Texas.

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